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MARGARET LAWRENCE--THRICE A PIONEER

Reminiscence of girlhood days on a farm in Quebec and of the visit of Edward, Prince of Wales, to Montreal, in the '60's--first hand impressions of the celebration of the initial birthday of the Dominion--a young married couple makes a start on an Ontario sugar bush farm--travelling from Kingston to Fort Vermilion the year after the Reil Rebellion--life as it was lived by the earliest Peace River settlers--all coming within the memory of a woman now living in Saskatchewan--told by MARGARET LAWRENCE to H.S. HOLDEN.

My early home was in Quebec. I was born at St. Ours and was one of 11 children. While I was still young my father, James Ham, moved to Granby and finally to South Stukely, near Montreal. I was reared among French children and the first words I spoke were in the tongue of Cartier and Champlain. I got little schooling, for in those days compulsory education was not even thought of and it was regarded as a sheer waste of time and money to give a girl an education.

We had a farm of 160 acres but not all of it was under cultivation. Being the second eldest I helped my father with the work of the farm until my younger brothers grew up. During the haying and harvesting seasons I was required to be in the fields more than at any other time.

Father cut the hay with a scythe and I followed with a fork, turning the swathes to dry. Later I came back with a large wooden rake to cock the hay so that it would shed water. A two-wheeled cart drawn by oxen took the fodder to the barn where it was stored over the animals' stalls. The barns were log structures designed so that a cart could be driven through the centre.

The scythe was also used to cut grain. After being stooked the crop was hauled to the threshing floor in the barn. The flail was used to separate the grain from the straw. After it received a thorough pounding with this implement, which was about the size of a baseball bat, the grain was ready to clean. In order to do this the grain was placed in a pan and shaken while someone stood over it swinging a sack to fan the chaff away.

At the age of 15 I had an exciting experience. Father promised to take me to the city. He had to drive some horses to Michigan. He planned to leave me with my grandmother in Montreal, until his return. I had never seen a large city or a wide river before. My heart was vibrant with emotion as we descended the hills and looked out over the mighty St. Lawrence. It was just sunset time as we took the ferry to cross over to the island. The windows of the houses shone as if they were made of gold. I felt as if heaven must look something like that city looked to me that evening.

I was fortunate to be in Montreal at that time as Edward, Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII), was expected to visit the city. Flags waved from the housetops while the main thoroughfares were decorated with arches and streamers. The great metropolis was in gala attire for the 18-year-old heir to the British throne, who saw prepared for him a flaming welcome from a new country still in the colonial stage (1860).

On the day of the Prince's arrival, throngs of people from near and far obstructed traffic for several blocks along the avenues adjacent to Crystal Palace, a magnificent structure on St. Catherine's Street, where Prince Edward was to appear. Cheering broke out at intervals and band music stirred our blood with patriotic aris. At last the future king appeared on the balcony overlooking the excited throng of humanity. Subdued with mixed emotions of excitement, and disappointment, I tearfully burst forth, "Why he's just a young boy and they are making such a fuss over him."

That night a ball was held in his honor. A dancing pavilion had been erected on an acre lot for the purpose. Trees of various kinds had been brought in to form a natural enclosure. Colored Japanese lanterns swung from the branches as if keeping time to the lively music, while partners danced the waltz and quadrille.

At the age of 17 I was placed in a Waterloo, Quebec, tailoring establishment to serve a year's apprenticeship. My work apparently proved satisfactory for I was added to the staff of permanent employees on "going wages," which amounted to 35 cents a day. Our days started with sunrise and often lasted through till ten o'clock at night, even till midnight in the rush season.

At the age of 18 I returned to my people at South Stukely. There I went from house to house making suits of clothes for men and women at the rate of 35 cents a day. Most of the people were as exacting in the hours of work as the tailor had been. Women were wearing crinolines at that time. Father forbade us girls to wear hoops. My elder sister Mary and I paid no more heed to this parental ordinance than do most girls. We knew a place in the bush where a man was making wooden hoops--only the elite could afford steel hoops. We were exuberant when he gave us each one. I think I had as much pride as any modern Miss, when I stepped into my first hoopskirt and tight-fitting waist.

The next event of unusual importance in my life was the first of July, 1867-- Canada's initial birthday. In the morning of that day my sister Grace and I took the train to Montreal. A young gentleman of my acquaintance, invited us to attend the big celebration. From a promontory on the slopes of old Mount Royal we witnessed 8,000 soldiers on parade. Shortly after dusk, the fireworks started on the grounds of McGill University. We watched the sizzling

rockets shower their tinted sparks until quite late in the evening. Thus did Montreal celebrate the confederation of four Canadian provinces into one Dominion!

Two years later I celebrated the first of July in a special way by marrying the man of my choice--Henry Hollis Lawrence. The 39 years of married life that followed were not all bliss but they never caused me to regret the step taken on that day.

Ours was a quiet wedding in the morning at the country home of my people, with only the immediate members of our families present. After dinner Henry drove me over to his place, where a surprise party had been planned. The yard was filled with horses, buggies and neighbors. Prolonged cheers greeted us as we drove in. One man saluted by firing a shot gun into the air. Here a banquet was in store for us.

11.

After our marriage my husband and I farmed near South Stukely in Shefford Country, Quebec. We were not far from Lawrenceville, which was named after Henry's grandfather, who had come from Vermont. It was natural that Henry should look towards the free lands of Ontario, when he found it unprofitable to till a rented farm. The spring of 1879 found him in Frontenac County (north of Kingston) near Plevna. Henry's plan was to erect buildings on the homestead before sending for the children and me. However, he found a man of that neighborhood was leaving for the

United States. Henry rented his farm and wired for me to meet him in Kingston the next day.

I would never have been able to get my six children ready if kind neighbors had not helped me. As it was I worked all that night. In order to secure the necessary money for the railway fare I had to lead the family cow from one farmer to another until I secured a satisfactory offer of \$30.

Next morning we were driven across to Waterloo by uncle Isaac, in the old democrat. We had to change cars at Montreal for Kingston. The train was moving out of the station when we arrived. You may imagine our excitement! My eldest sons with big parcels, the little girls with handbags and myself with a baby in arms, presented a scene as we hurried towards the departing train beckoning it with shouts and waves to stop, which it did. The conductor was good natured and jocularly told me that he wasn't going to pass all the children free after having to stop the train especially on our account. At two o'clock in the afternoon we were met by Henry in Kingston from where we took a train to Clarendon. At the last named place we embarked on a 30-mile wagon trip through bush country. Before the journey was half over darkness had fallen and we spent the night at a farmhouse along the way. Bright and early the next morning we were on our way. The little log house at the end of the road looked good to all of us.

As soon as Henry finished the house on our homestead we left the rented farm. Fortunately a 20-acre clearing, where the timber had been used for making potash several years previously, was on our claim. Here we raised garden truck. The main source of livelihood, however, was a grove of 100 maple trees. During April and May we made maple sugar. This was a busy season for us, especially when there was a good run of sap. During the year we would make approximately 300 pounds of sugar. Maple syrup had no commercial value then, as it has today.

Our house was built, as were most things in those days, by having a bee. It was made with hewn spruce logs, which was covered with lumber on the outside and with plaster within. The floors were of hewn hardwood. A heater kept us warm during the winter months when Henry was off to the lumber camps. He returned each Saturday night, usually well loaded with vermin. When he arrived I had a change of clothes ready for him, beside a tub of warm water. He also knew how to use a fine comb. When his tubbing and change were over he was welcomed back into the family circle as a member in very good standing.

My two eldest sons, Sheridan and Jim, had the duties of supplying the house with firewood and doing odd chores about the place. One of those odd chores was to make lye. Fat meat was saved and combined with the lye in making the family lauhdry and toilet soap.

We tanned horse and cow hides at home in those days. After soaking them in a solution the hides were stretched

and dried in the sun for a week or two. Then we were ready for the shoemaker who would come to outfit the entire family in footwear, much as I made clothes for families, when I was a tailoress.

Spinning of cloth was another line of home manufacture in those days. Fifty years ago a loom was as common a household article as the sewing machine is today. Henry had an overcoat made by me from cloth we spun at home. The overcoat lasted most of his lifetime and the cloth from it is still giving service in patchwork in a quilt which is in use. The quilting bees we had in our homes in those days were social events, greatly anticipated.

The children attended school only part of the time as we were six miles from a school and there was no means of conveyance for them other than walking, which was out of the question for the little tots. Sometimes they lodged with people living near the school but that was too expensive for five and six children, continuously. Their help was needed at home as Henry was away most of the time and he required assistance during the busy sugar-making season. But the children had their own good times with games as country children do.

111.

We were not to remain long in our sugar bush. The Church of England Missionary Society were sending volunteers to open schools in the north for the education of Indian children. For twelve years Henry's brother, Erastus, had

supervised the Irene Training School founded at Ft. Vermilion, Peace River, N.W.T. (now Alberta). This institution embraced a section of land and the children were taught farming--thus helping them to be self-supporting. Bishop Bompas, who had charge of that diocese, asked my husband to be the farm instructor of this school. Henry accepted the call and we sold our belongings in preparation for the long and tedious journey. Just then news came of the Riel Rebellion, necessitating a change in our plans. Henry decided to go alone.

Several months later I received a letter from him apprising us of his safe arrival in the north and telling how we should prepare for the journey. This was the only letter he was able to send before I left with the children the next year.

A few days prior to our departure, a buggy drove into the yard to take me to the Community Hall where a special meeting was being held. The building was crowded when I arrived and I had to sit near the front. It was a total surprise to me when I was presented with a kitchen clock and a tie.

It was April 1886 when my eight children and I left Plevna. A neighbor took us and our freight 20 miles in his wagon to Lavant station. The mission school sent one of its head men, Mr. Melrose, to Winnipeg to purchase a portable engine, grist-mill, sawmill, threshing machine, organ, sewing machine and a year's supply of groceries for the school

and our two families. My husband's brother, Isaac Lawrence, who lived east of Montreal, at the same time brought west three yoke of oxen, several head of young cattle, pigs, hens and a cow.

We were obliged to wait a week in Winnipeg for our train. Brandon, Regina, Moose Jaw and Medicine Hat were but small stopping places along the steel that terminated at the little village of Calgary. In those days, "the cow-town" boasted of only a few shacks most of which were sod. Everything bespoke the wild, wild West. What a contrast to the flourishing city that today reposes in the valley of the Bow.

A terrific mid-summer blizzard followed by rain had flooded the streets the day before our arrival. After clogging over a muddy road, we reached the little hotel where a woman met us at the door with a broom to clean our feet.

After a most refreshing night's sleep, we proceeded to discuss our plans the following morning. A stage made weekly trips from Calgary to Edmonton. It was my brother-in-law's wish that I should travel that way. I knew that, if I did, there would be a long wait for me in an Edmonton boarding-house; so I begged permission to accompany the outfit. A trail with unknown dangers lay between us and Edmonton. Indians lurked everywhere. After Edmonton, was a further distance of 700 miles. We had to look forward to travelling the whole way with oxen.

Taking eight children between the ages of four and

sixteen, with an outfit, was an undertaking which required courage. We left Calgary in high spirits. Alberta's traditionally clear, sunny weather was smiling upon us. Fifteen miles per day was our average speed. The youngsters and I usually kept ahead of the wagon. We picked berries and flowers while on this greatest lark of our lives.

A mile north of Calgary we found that the bridge over the Bow River had been washed downstream by the spring and early summer floods. The men took oxen and hauled it back against the current to the trail. This detained us most of the afternoon. Meanwhile, I had done some washing and the clothes were drying on the bushes. The children were having a good time catching gophers, the first we had ever seen.

Although it was well nigh evening ere the bridge was repaired, we crossed the river and made a few more miles before stopping for the night. At this point we met a company of soldiers who were still watching the Indians.

Before leaving Ontario, I had made a tent for our journey out of heavy twill cotton. This was raised nearly every night. A heater inside it gave us comfort during the cold wet days. Each day was filled with new adventures and discoveries for the children. It was always a tired but happy family that slept under Alberta's clear skies.

Most of our travelling was done in the cool of the mornings and evenings when the whole realm of nature was at its best. We adopted the custom of journeying a few miles before stopping for breakfast each morning. Mealtime

was always greeted with keen appetites by all. No travelling was done on Sunday. Our little company of 11 (consisting of Mr. Melrose, brother-in-law Isaac, the eight children and myself), held service on the road. God's universe was our chapel.

The bread supply we purchased in Calgary soon diminished and I had to make bannocks which were prepared in much the same way as pancakes. Of course, my ingredients and culinary utensils were of the crudest type as only the barest necessities were at hand. Nine or ten bannocks sufficed for each day. Mr. Melrose had made the first supply of bannocks when our supply of bread became exhausted but, thereafter, it was my duty every night until we passed the treeless prairie and were nearer Edmonton. We had brought 20 maple-sugar sap buckets west with us and, in one of these, I set the dough each morning. By noon it would be risen so that I could form the loaves. Each night I would get one of the men to dig a hole in the ground. Here a good fire was started. An iron kettle, such as lumbermen use, was my bread pan. Covering it snugly for an hour under the bed of hot coals, I would be able to produce four big, flaky loaves of bread as light and delectable as I have ever baked.

Portages over larger rivers, such as the Red Deer and Saskatchewan, were made by ferry. We did not stop at Edmonton which could not boast of much more than Mounted Police barracks. Hudson's Bay fort and the missions of the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches. We halted near

Athabasca Landing when we found that there was no way of crossing the river which, to us, had the appearance of a mighty stream. We really looked like a large encampment as we prepared to spend some time near the shore.

The scenic grandeur of the Athabasca's basswood covered slopes was very awe-inspiring. The girls were delighted to find wild saskatoons and strawberries in abundance there. Our cow furnished cream; so we fared sumptuously on several delicacies. I baked pies in the same manner as I did bread. The children had chopped poplars for poles to make a living-room for us. They called it "our dining-room." The branches made a cool shade. Of course, we would not feel at home without the tent as well. Everybody was enjoying the best of health and the highest of spirits.

We had been at this point a week when a newly-wedded minister and his bride from England unexpectedly called on us. I invited them into our "dining-room" where I had just taken a batch of fresh buns from our "oven". The young bride was delighted with my cooking.

A month passed before our boats finally arrived. The three that did come were of the old York type. Each had to be towed from the shore by men who were attached to each other by straps that braced their shoulders. The men worked in shifts as we journeyed up the Athabasca and Slave Rivers to Lesser Slave Lake. They worked like galley slaves. Large beads of perspiration dripped from their foreheads

and their bodies lathered under the strenuous labor.

The sun was setting when we reached Lesser Slave Lake. A fierce wind was blowing. The men took the oars to row us across. The captain ordered them to land on an island as the high waves were endangering our cargo. The roar of the wind and the waves was in our ears all that night. About noon the next day the wind had somewhat abated and we ventured on the remainder of the lake journey. I have never since had, nor do I want to have again, such a rocking and a splashing as we received that afternoon. We were out of sight of land and the waves tossed our boat around. It called for all the courage our hearts could muster. The captain assured us that his old boat had weathered worse storms. Mr. Daniel was the name of the owner of the boat. The ingenious mind of one of my little girls named the craft "Daniel's Den". It was a comforting thought to me that Daniel's Den would rest on land by night.

We camped near the Hudson's Bay fort on the bleak shore of Lesser Slave Lake for several days while Mr. Melrose, Sheridan and Jim drove the cattle overland along the shore of the lake. Indians camped near us in their teepees. My brother-in-law Isaac was with us so we felt quite safe.

Finally the boys came with the cattle and we were started on our last portage of 90 miles, which we made in a little over five days. This brought us to the mighty Peace.

As we gazed from the upper banks, 500 feet above the river level, all the panoramic grandeur that met our eyes could not be appreciated at one glance. The perceptibly gliding current, the pine-clad banks, the bright evening sky irradiant with the setting sun, were all vividly reflected in the clear water of the stream. To the south, the Smoky River meandered round bends of rock and over gravelly flats to find its way to the junction of the Peace, where were deposited huge deltas of sand. From the east the little Hart River babbled over stony places.

At Peace River Landing, the stream was a quarter of a mile wide. We camped near the Hudson's Bay Company's log store-house, which was the only building on this flat section where now stands the thriving town of today. When we arrived, no life existed there but a band of wild horses.

The men experienced considerable difficulty in bringing the portable engine down the steep embankment. It was found necessary to hitch one team of oxen in front to start it down and two other teams behind to keep it from going too fast, as the engine was not equipped with brakes.

Dawn of the first morning found the men leaving us to go up the river to an island where they cut timber for a raft that would be large enough to float our cargo. While they were working, the girls and I picked saskatoons and raspberries. The men took four days to build the scow and they wore proud faces when their 50 x 60-foot craft stole alongside the shore. Loading the engine was an undertaking

in itself as so much care was necessary to keep the raft from upsetting and the gang-planks from breaking. With that accomplished, a fence had to be built around the outside of the raft to prevent the animals from pushing each other into the river. Oars had been placed on the raft in case we drifted out of the current which we planned would carry us downstream.

Each day we saw several bears. On either side of the river they could be seen climbing pines for the cones, picking berries, walking or swimming.

On the second day, excitement was stirred up when we saw a canoe approaching in the distance. It was mail carriers bringing word from my husband--the second letter written since he left us in the east. His spirit was as high as ours. Note the way his letter opened:

"My dear Maggie,

The goose hangs high. We have been using new potatoes for the past month. The grain promises immense returns....."

We were overjoyed at this news as we had not tasted potatoes but once, that being when we stopped at a farmhouse between Calgary and Edmonton.

On the morning of the sixth day, the men fired the engine enough to blow the whistle. A couple of hours later, we sighted an approaching canoe. Henry had heard our salute and was nearing speedily, taking time to wave his paddle

occasionally. Brother Erastus' daughter Susie was with him.

Our souls vibrated with the beauty and exciting wonder about us. Here the river was a mile wide. The clear water and the clearer sky, with the birch, hemlock and spruce-clad shoreline, was a romantic sight. The Indians had heard our whistle and were scattered in small groups along the banks to watch us.

Landing near the Irene Mission School, we were given a real western welcome by Erastus, his wife Lydia and their children. The attention of an old Indian woman had been attracted to me and she humbly offered a ball of spruce gum which had been chewed. This was tendered as a symbol of goodwill.

At that time Fort Vermilion comprised the Hudson's Bay Fort, churches, mission schools and other buildings of the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches. Henry's work at the Mission was to teach the Indian boys and girls modern farming methods. They had raised over 1,000 bushels of potatoes and a splendid crop of wheat and barley. Erastus' wife taught them religion and schoolwork five hours each day.

During the winter we had several debates, besides the Christmas tree for the children. The debate that I best remember was on the subject: "Resolved that wheat can be successfully grown at Fort Vermilion". Henry was the leader of the affirmative and had a decisive victory over his brother who led the negative.

We spent the remainder of the season and the winter at the Irene Training School. My dream had been to have a home to call my own no matter how humble it might be. The Mission had not built us one, as had been promised. In the spring, we decided to farm for ourselves.

IV.

The early months of 1888 saw us settled in our little homestead twelve miles up the river from Fort Vermilion. Here we prepared to battle discouragements in a new land where few whites had ever set foot. Farming was yet an experiment and fur traders did not fail to fabricate stories of starvation and other ghastly horrors that awaited us if we tried to live by our own industry. Henry and I were undaunted as we resolutely determined to show them what hard work, coupled with courage and faith, could do. It was well, however, that we did not know what obstacles lay ahead.

A log shack had been erected for the convenience of haymakers a quarter of a mile from the river. It looked good to us, sheltered as it was by a 100-foot hill.

One bright Sunday morning (May 8, 1888), Henry was up early doing chores. Before coming into the house, he stopped to admire the tiers of ice that were peering over the banks of the Peace. He called us outside to see the spectacle. We did not mistrust that a flood was upon us so had breakfast and family prayers as usual; after which we walked down to view the imposing sight first hand.

Upon reaching the river's edge, the great grinding mass of ice and water in some places was beginning to flow over the brink of what was becoming a vast roaring torrent. We hurried back to the cabin with all possible haste. Henry had a mower on the bank that he feared would be lost. As luck had it, the oxen were hitched to it before the water was too deep. When the mower was safe, he worked to weight down the woodpile. Most of his year's work was represented in that woodpile but his efforts were all to no avail. Within a few hours, chips, stovewood, and timbers were part of that surging, foaming mass.

The children and I were exercised in saving our household effects. Minnie and Harry went down cellar to salvage as much of three sacks of potatoes as possible. They worked as long as it was safe and succeeded in dragging two bags to the high river bank.

Fortunately the boys had made two dugout canoes from large logs the previous day. When at last the water was too deep for the rest of us, Sheridan, our eldest boy, took his canoe and paddled in the cabin to load up from the shelves. On the last trip, Sheridan was not so sure of getting the canoe out of the cabin as the water was within two feet of the top of the door. Almost everything was brought in safety to the big hill.

The river at our place was about two miles in width at the time of the flood. During those six nights we stayed on the hill, I used to lie awake gazing at the stars wondering what would be the outcome of our predicament. Were the

prognostications of our friends to come true? Would it not be wise to turn back to civilization? We simply had to see the game through to the end some way, and win out. That was all there was to it. The worry was distracting to Henry and myself but we seldom had our blue spells together. I encouraged him and he had a wonderful way of jollyng me.

By Saturday the river had receded to its usual basin, leaving huge cakes of ice in our meadow. These blocks ranged in size up to 20 feet in diameter. Our yard bore the appearance of a grave yard for many days till they melted. Everything was covered with the river's slime. It took several days of cleaning before our cabin was habitable. As soon as the flood started to ebb, Henry went up the river 12 miles where Jim and Arthur were caring for two dozen or more head of cattle. During nights the boys had slept in a tent. On the morning of the flood, they had been wakened by the water soaking through their bedding. Ducks that they had shot the previous day were floating around. It kept them hustling to save their tent and to get the cattle up on the high river bank. For the week of their encampment on the hill, the poor fellows had practically been without food.

On the third day of July of that same year, I had the joy of giving birth to the first white boy to be born in the Peace River country. It was only a few hours after little Wilson entered the world that two of our small boys were lost.

Arthur, John and Isaac had been driving the cows to pasture after the morning's milking. In doing this, they had to follow paths that led through tall trees and dense underbrush. On the way back, they came to a place where the paths diverged. Not having noticed this junction before, a dispute followed as to which was the way they had come. Finally Arthur took the right path while Isaac and John chose the other.

When there was no sign of the two boys at noon, we became anxious. Everybody but myself and youngest children joined in the search--even my dear old nurse Mrs. Smith. There was not a neighbor within ten miles of our "Riverside Ranch" and the two lads could wander for days in a trackless waste of bush and muskeg.

For a time they trudged merrily along chatting and mimicking the songs of birds until they suddenly realized that they were passing no familiar landmarks. Weariness and hunger brought despair to their little hearts while small bare legs and hands were easy marks for ravenous mosquitoes and thorny underbush.

The two boys tramped all day and their spirits sagged as the sun disappeared and dusk gathered. With serious countenance, Isaac turned to John. "Let us pray" he said.

"I can't. You pray" sobbed John.

The two boys then knelt down and this is how my eight-year old son petitioned the Almighty: "O Lord, we are lost. Lead us home again. Amen."

It was not long after that they came to the river.

Somehow they sensed that the homestead was downstream so ran along the sandy shore as fast as their wee bleeding legs could carry them until the millstream brought a halt to their race. As it was too wide and swift to wade, they had to follow the creek from the mouth until they came to a fallen log across the roaring water. Firmly grasping branches and knots, the two boys slowly crawled across this natural bridge. The whirling rapids made John so dizzy that he almost lost his balance. Isaac helped him keep his head.

The buildings were one-half mile distant when the boys first caught a glimpse of them. They ran into the yard unnoticed--possibly because they came from the opposite direction to which they had disappeared.

"We've been lost" said Isaac, with wide open eyes, as if their day's absence had not concerned us at all.

"Why, we know it dear boys," I told them. "Your father and the men have been looking for you all day ringing bells and firing guns. Did you not hear them?"

A few years later, Isaac was again our lost son. He and Sheridan were in a canoe en route to Peace River Crossing when Isaac became ill. The boys decided that the best thing to do would be for Sheridan to hire an Indian to take him the remainder of the journey, while Isaac drifted home in the canoe.

As the nights were short and never dark, Isaac thought he would let the canoe drift all night. The current in the springtime was 12 or 15 miles an hour and would carry him home by morning. The poor boy, however, was too ill to sit

up all the time and didn't even know when he passed our peaceful dwelling. He was still unconscious in the bottom of the canoe when passing Fort Vermilion.

His boat was seen by men at the Roman Catholic Mission and Hudson's Bay trading post but they thought it was one of many derelicts that drifted down the river. The last white settlement was the Anglican Mission before the Hudson's Bay post at Little Red River was reached--a distance of 70 miles. Ten miles up from that point were the Vermilion chutes. No foolhardy boatman had ever tried to ride those mad rapids. Perhaps it was the roar of dashing waters, perhaps the hand of Providence, in any event Isaac was aroused to a feeling of impending danger. Grabbing his paddle, he pulled for the shore with all his strength. The waters were dashing and swirling round him. Foaming waves sprayed his brow while one big splash washed his food supply and matches out of the bateau. Had he not been expert with the canoe, no amount of strength could have saved him. Later he learned that a landing on the opposite side of the river would have been impossible to effect.

How long he lay on the sand in a semi-conscious condition Isaac did not know. Several times he wriggled down to the river to quench his thirst. Upon crawling to the bushes for shelter from the hot sun, he found raspberries which were his only food. While the fever was at its height, he suffered untold misery. Bloodthirsty flies and mosquitoes kept up a continual hum. Again and again he

prayed God to spare him from death "for mother's sake". Hope and strength were ebbing when he made another big effort to reach the river for a drink. What must have been his relief when he heard voices? Looking up, he recognized friends returning from Little Red River. Their surprise was equal to his.

At Fort Vermilion Isaac was left under the care of relatives while a messenger sped along the ten-mile trail to advise us at the ranch. We had not expected him for at least four weeks.

Breaking-in bucking bronchos was a specialty with the boys. I have seen beasts so tired from trying to throw them that they would have to lie down. During the months of snow, the boys had their trap lines which they visited regularly. The animals that provided most of the furs were skunks, silver foxes, mink, marten, lynx, muskrats, ermine, bears, wolverines, coyotes and beavers. The latter animal gnawed-off acres of trees, leaving stumps two feet high.

In the spring, trappers for hundreds of miles met at the trading posts. Each was interested in knowing what success the other had had. Was so-and-so married? If not, when would the event transpire? Gossippers attacked the girl-problem from various angles and tried to outdo each other in telling exaggerated hunting tales.

As soon as it was possible, Henry plowed 30 acres for barley. After sowing this by scattering the seeds on the ground, he planted corn and potatoes on the high river bank

as they would be safer in the event of a frost.

With our brothers' 12 cows, we were well supplied with milk, cream and butter. Needless to say, the children were healthy. Flour at that time commanded a price of \$25 a sack. Only once did we enjoy the luxury of flour at this price. Sheridan worked for the Hudson's Bay Company until his credit account could be cancelled by a 100-pound sack of the precious commodity. We used the flour only on special occasions such as birthdays or visits from the bishop.

Pearled barley was our main piece-de-resistance. My husband had found a large tree in the bush. It had a hollow diameter of 25 inches, and Henry brought it home for a pounding block. A large wooden mallet in the hands of one of the older children was then required to do the pounding. The amount of barley needed for a few days would be moistened and placed in the hollow block. The boys did the pounding with a mallet and soon the pearled barley was ready for cooking. As a cereal, this was a popular breakfast food. With beef and other vegetables, it made delicious soup. Boiled longer by itself, it made a pudding similar to rice. This went very well with our dried saskatoons and other fruit.

Our meadow was a veritable garden of wild raspberries, gooseberries, blackcurrants, and cranberries. From the slopes of the high river bank our table was bountifully supplied with saskatoons, chokecherries, mossberries, blueberries and pincherries. We had plenty of fruit and preserved the excess for winter use in the old-fashioned wooden powder

kegs. These held about five gallons. Tallow was an excellent substitute for paraffin as an air-tight seal. We added to our larder wild geese, ducks and partridge. Henry made a churn from one of the kegs of which I made good use.

It meant much loss to us, when a frost ruined the potato crop early in July of 1887. Our harvest that fall was two sacks, the largest potato being the size of a hen's egg. We tasted none ourselves but saved all for seed.

Subsequently we reaped splendid crops of barley and potatoes. The flood had deposited a fertilizing sediment that engendered a most prolific growth, the effects of which were noticeable for several years. We were never again visited by a bad flood.

We cut barley and raked it by machinery, as farmers now do. Stacks were then built in a circle, which was surrounded by a road and log fence. Several men stood on the stacks pitching barley into the roadway while the boys chased oxen and horses around. This was our annual threshing scene for 15 years until a binder and threshing machine were brought into the country.

The following year we obtained a little wheat from the Mission. Since we had demonstrated that barley and potatoes could be successfully grown north of the river, the seed was willingly offered. With his yoke of oxen and one horse named Charlie, my husband was able to do the plowing. Quite often he worked most of the nights during the summer months when the sun was visible for 18 hours a

day. This is contributive to the prolific growth in these northern areas. Whereas it takes 110 days for wheat to reach its full growth on the southern Canadian prairies, 90 days is all that is required in the Peace River district. My sons, who still farm in the Peace River country, in 1928 reported the first drought in history. It is possible that with so much land coming under cultivation, frost is not so easily retained in the ground.

In the year 1896 we brought a flour mill into the country. This was run by water power from the nearby creek. Although it was small, we were able to raise enough grain to keep it busy day and night during the spring high waters. This soon brought the exorbitant price of flour down and real white bread took its rightful place in our household as the staff of life.

Our faith in the Peace River country augmented with each succeeding year. We were prospering and were happy. The children received their public school education at the Anglican Mission. My husband's brother and his wife taught there for years.

In the spring of 1890 a plea for help was received from the Right Reverend Bishop Bompas who wished to open an Indian Boarding School at Fort Resolution, where an Anglican Mission had already been established with Rev. and Mrs. Spendlove in charge. Sheridan and Grace volunteered their services and set off, accompanied by their younger brother, Harry, on a raft well provisioned for a year. The little party pro-

ceeded on its perilous journey, running rapids that would have made more experienced river men quail. Finally they arrived at Fort Smith without mishap from where the steamer took them to their destination on the shore of Great Slave Lake.

Sheridan's first task as manager, upon reaching Fort Resolution, was to supervise the construction of the Mission School. Logs had to be hewn and dragged some distance to the site of the new structure near the little log church.

Grace's scholars arrived when the combined school and dwelling house was completed. Archdeacon McDonald's daughter Annie was the first white child outside of Rev. Spendlove's family to attend. Sheridan and his Indian men supplied the fuel and provisioned the Mission with 5,000 trout, jack and white fish taken from Great Slave Lake. The Indians called Sheridan the "Big White Man".

My intrepid son and daughter stayed at Fort Resolution four and six years, respectively. Sheridan had heard that his father had purchased a grist mill and wanted to come home and help operate it. Grace determined to be a medical missionary in the Great North. To realize this ambition, she went to Montreal to enter training in the General Hospital there.

Great was our grief a year after her departure when news came of her death from pneumonia. We received our mail only three times a year. At the time we received word of her death, the same mail also brought letters that she

had written before taking sick.

V.

Many readers will be able to recall at least rumors of the gold rush to the Yukon in 1898. Unfortunately, many of the fortune hunters had been induced to travel by train to Edmonton rather than to Vancouver, where boats provided safer transportation. Some of them offered prayers of thanksgiving when stepping off the train at Edmonton, thinking the worst of the journey to be over. Here they purchased provisions and horses on the understanding that plenty of natural hay would be obtainable along the road. Owing to the thick brush, however, little feed could be located and I did not hear of one horse that reached Peace River Crossing--300 miles distant. At that point, their task was to build a raft, as we had done. Many were ready as soon as the ice went out of the river early in May. Harry, my third eldest son, accompanied one of the first outfits that passed our place.

Several parties stopped at our place en route. One group from Chicago saw a woman in a red dress down by the river bank. This was such an extra-ordinary sight that they made an excuse to land. It happened that this woman in the red dress was Florence, Jim's wife. After a drink of milk, they proceeded to Fort Vermilion where they spent the night.

The following day being Sunday, they attended our Mission church. As they were musical, the pastor asked them to accompany the organ with their orchestra. One of the young men rendered a piccolo solo during the offertory.

Following the service, we and our Chicago friends went to brother Erastus' house. Here we sang old hymns to their accompaniment, enjoying a very sociable day.

When we had become better acquainted, they told Florence to always wear that same red dress so that the hearts of other wayfarers might be thrilled as theirs had been, after not having seen a woman for so long.

Next morning they resumed their hazardous journey and the last we saw of them they were drifting downstream while over the resonant air came the strains of an old familiar hymn.

Many had exhausted their food supply before reaching our place. All we could do, however, was give them a little bran and flour and send them ten miles further to the Hudson's Bay store at Fort Vermilion. Other parties did not stop at either our place or Fort Vermilion. Unaware of the dangers ahead, they went over the Chutes and their bones were later washed ashore.

It had been rumored that Lord Ravenhurst was going to the Yukon. For several days we had been expressing the hope that he would stop at our place for a while. Great was our exultation when Will, our youngest child, came running in with excited eyes, shouting, "I think Lord Ravenhurst is here". We went to the door to find three weary adventurers in long, tattered coats and bare feet. They were from Connecticut and were on the verge of starvation. After relishing a meal, they remarked that it had been a long time since they had seen painted woodwork or an organ in a house.

Our most interesting visitor during the pilgrimage for gold was Mr. Veats, a native of Nova Scotia. He was an elderly gentleman who had suffered pecuniary misfortune, like most of the other wayfarers to the Klondyke. His hopes for wealth were dashed asunder by the cruel hardships he had to face in the northern wilds.

Returning to Fort Vermilion, he obtained work for the winter at the Mission. As Erastus had a large family of boys, his need for Mr. Veats was not very great. In the spring, therefore, he came to operate our flour mill. We put to good profit his superior knowledge of machinery. The more he was with us, the more we became attached to him. Being well educated, he was able to enlighten us on most current topics. When the high water had ebbed and the milling was over, he had earned sufficient money to carry him back to eastern Canada. We learned later that Mr. Veats had become a librarian in the Parliament Buildings at Ottawa. This position he held until his death.

VI

Late in the year 1900, Sheridan brought his bride from Winnipeg to live with us. Her father, Archdeacon Scott, had been one of the incumbents at our little church in Fort Vermilion. Soon after Sheridan and Julia married, Henry and I decided that we would leave the north. He had been a chronic sufferer from asthma and wanted to be near a doctor. Sheridan had demonstrated his capability as a manager on many occasions so we had great confidence in him and his bride.

In the spring of 1901, Henry left for Edmonton by boat, accompanied by Arthur and Wilson, his plan being to locate the most suitable residence. Our love for the West was so strong that neither of us could consider returning to eastern Canada. After visits to Manitoba and the North and South Dakota, also Quebec, the province of our birth, he wrote for me to come to the little town of Boissevain, Manitoba. Here he had purchased a 20-acre lot on the outskirts of the town where he planned to operate a dairy. His life had been so active that he could not think of living in idleness. It was thought dairying would not be strenuous but we found ourselves up against real hard labor. It was very foolish of us for we did not need to work; but neither of us would have been contented in complete retirement.

Henry made a practice of rising at four o'clock every morning. While the porridge was cooking he would lie down on the lounge for a little nap. It was in such a restful position that I found him on the morning of August 12, 1908.

"And Enoch walked with God and was not, for God took him"; was the text of the sermon preached at his funeral.

Our son John proved very devoted and capably supervised the sale of our dairy and household effects. I then went to live with my daughter Minnie who had married a farmer who afterwards became one of the town merchants.

In 1913, my son Isaac took me on a trip to South Dakota and across the continent to Massachusetts where we visited relatives in Boston and Worcester. Of course, our visit

East would not have been complete without seeing old neighbors and relatives in Montreal, Waterloo and South Stukley. This enjoyable journey put new blood into me and I felt like travelling further. Upon our return, therefore, I accompanied Isaac back to the great Peace River country.

During the early part of the war, when the call to duty was being shouted throughout the British Empire, Isaac was determined to enlist. Press reports had emphasized the necessity for more men and he felt that his country needed him. Walking 350 miles in the dead of winter from Fort Vermilion to Peace River, Isaac took the train to Edmonton where he enlisted with the 63rd Edmonton Battalion in February, 1916.

On the 26th day of the following September, the casualty list appearing in all the daily papers contained his name under "Killed in Action." The chaplain of Isaac's battalion wrote me that Isaac had been one of the Company who had met instant death by a bomb explosion at Corcelette as they were adjusting their machine gun in a new position.

One other son, Harry, offered his life but was rejected. Returning to the Peace River country, he took a homestead near Arthur in the Grande Prairie district. Arthur's demise occurred in February, 1926. Jim, John and Will are farming near Peace River.

Sheridan is still on our old Fort Vermilion "Riverside Ranch". With a family of 15, he has a quorum for church and a government school. He is giving a real education to any

of his children who show the desire to enter a profession. With three trading posts, he offers real live competition to the Hudson's Bay Company in that territory. Each spring he brings several thousands of dollars worth of hides and furs to Edmonton. His return cargo from the wholesalers is increasing annually. Not only does he accept furs from the Indians and half-breeds, but they also give him wheat, barley, cattle and hogs in exchange for flour, clothing and other merchandise. He has shipped as many as seven car loads of wheat to Fort William in a season but it is found to be more profitable to manufacture the flour and sell or trade it with the Indians. His wife is a real mother, wife and co-manager. It is she who attends to the business correspondence.

I returned to Fertile, Saskatchewan, in 1920 to reside with my son-in-law and daughter Minnie, who had left Manitoba during the seven years I had been visiting my sons in the North.

I am contented with the quiet country life. On Sundays I am usually able to attend church. During the week I do a little housework. I can still sew, although my eyes are not as strong as they were years ago. I will not let people brand me as an invalid while God gives me strength. The radio is a great means of entertainment. I particularly enjoy church services and lectures. In January of last year I was thrilled to hear Dr. Wilfred Grenfell broadcasting the message of Labrador from Washington, D.C.

So I would commend to all who feel old age creeping on them: Have some interests in life; keep active; don't let yourself grow stale. You will not last long after you quit greeting the world with a smile.

MRS. M.M. LAWRENCE DIED IN SASKATCHEWAN.

(Unverified clipping from Peace River Record, Nov. 3, 1933)

The death occurred at the home of her daughter in Fertile, Saskatchewan, Sunday, October 22, of Margaret M. Lawrence, widow of the late Henry H. Lawrence, and mother of James, John and Wilson Lawrence, of Peace River, Sheridan Lawrence of Fort Vermilion and Harry Lawrence in the Grande Prairie district, and one daughter Mrs. Minnie Holden, of Fertile, Saskatchewan.

Mrs. Lawrence who was born December 5, 1845, was one of the old pioneers of the West. With her husband she came to the Peace River country many years ago and spent a number of years in the Fort Vermilion country. She also lived here with her son, James, for several years, later leaving to live with her daughter in Saskatchewan. Her husband died in 1909.

The funeral took place at Boissevain, Manitoba, where Mrs. Lawrence formerly lived.